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The Cheaper LP Discs

Editorial Notes

WHETHER the orchestral-recital record will be dispensed with in time remains a moot question. However, to satisfy those who like to make their selections without intermingling others, which they do not want, the shorter LP, at half the price, has found a market for itself in a relatively short time. Among the major companies, Columbia and Decca opened up this market. Now London has issued a 10" short LP disc (9000 series) which augurs well for those who favor this type of record. Their first issue contains 25 discs of excerpts from previously released LPs. Since overtures usually run from eight to fourteen minutes, most of London's first series features these compositions. Reproduction is excellent; no loss of highs, lows or dynamic range was noted from original releases. Most of London's big name conductors are represented: Krips in Mozart overtures and a group of Johann Strauss waltzes; Boehm in Weber overtures; Solti in four von Suppe ones; Krauss in the *Fledermaus* and *Gypsy Baron* overtures; Martinon in a group of French ones on several discs; Tebaldi in arias from *Aida* and *Faust*; Albert Wolff in Massenet's *Phedre* and Saint-Saens' *La princesse jaune*; three discs of Beethoven overtures by Van Beinum and another of two of his recent Rossini ones; and a disc with Raphael Arie singing the Death Scene from *Boris* (London was the first to introduce us to this great artist) and *Ella giammai m'amo* from *Don Carlo*.

Decca, in its latest issues of short LPs (4000 series), brings out a group of re-

cordings made in this country which for hi-fi sound will find their way into homes of listener's who dote on realistic reproduction. Alexander Smallens, who knows how to make an orchestra sound, conducts the Stadium Concerts Symphony Orchestra of N.Y. (summer Philharmonic-Symphony) in brilliant performances of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* and *March Slav* (disc 4031), Strauss' *Salome Dance* and the *Rosenkavalier Waltzes* (disc 4032), Dvorak's *Carnaval* and Berlioz's *Beatrice and Benedict* overtures (disc 4034), and selections from *Eugen Onegin* coupled with Tchaikovsky's *Andante Cantabile* (disc 4033). The best of these is the *1812* and *March Slav* — virile renditions that sound. The Strauss operatic excerpts have a wealth of instrumental detail, we cannot recall when the harp in *Salome's Dance* was more realistic, but the pacing is slightly slower than usual. Dell' Isola with the same orchestra plays the two suites from *Carmen* (disc 4029). Other new releases feature the solid musical work of the German conductors Eugen Jochum, Ferdinand Leitner and Fritz Lehmann in selections from Wagner operas and overtures from Mozart operas. These are all original Deutsche Grammophon releases, excellently recorded, though not in the same class as the Stadium Concerts' discs. There's plenty of competition for these performances but most of it is at double the price.

Columbia's "Entre" series is the answer to RCA Victor's Bluebird Classics. The first group of records were largely reprints from past releases in the catalogue. Only

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one of these came our way — Harty's *Water Music* and *Royal Firework* record, which we discuss elsewhere. It seems to me that Columbia would not be remiss in republishing other performances like the Harty ones — performances which were favorably received in their day — even though the recording is now dated. (Could Columbia entice Sir Thomas Beecham to let them include some of his earlier performances which he is not thinking of duplicating?) Reprints of performances that were technically below standard in their day are only feasible if the performance is first-rate. Looking down the first list, we were pleased to see Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony represented, as well as Howard Barlow, once the much admired conductor of the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony in the days when CBS aired some of the best orchestral programs in radio. Mitropoulos' old recordings with the Minneapolis Symphony did not offer the best reproduction in their time, but they are souvenirs of his long association with the orchestra which some may want, though his modern recordings serve his artistry far better.

There is one point about some of these old recordings which has been overlooked by reviewers to date. Most listeners who own commercial equipment will probably derive as much pleasure in sound from these old recordings as from any modern ones. The best of high fidelity is cut off on most commercial equipment, but the best of these older recordings is reproduced. In our estimation, Columbia was

smart in making available some of these releases for the listener whose pocketbook is slim, and whose equipment belongs in the inexpensive category. He will obtain a lot more satisfaction from these Columbia reprints than he ever will from the \$1.89 or cheaper recordings of symphonies, orchestral excerpts, etc. that emanate from nefarious sources such as second-rate radio performances, picked up here and there in Europe without the performers' knowledge or sanction. The record without artists' names is of dubious worth!

A Note on Scherchen's "Ninth"

A New York correspondent writes us as follows: "In your review of the Scherchen-Westminster release of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, you say — 'one should not listen to this performance after hearing the Toscanini and Kleiber versions, because it may well generate frustration.' That remark can be interpreted in more than one way and, for that reason, seems unfair to me. I took the Toscanini, the Kleiber and the Scherchen releases home and played them in that order, not once but three times. Herr Scherchen generated no frustration in me, instead he won me over completely for a realistic performance which was noble, dignified and powerful. True, it is, as you say, 'that kind of uncompromising music-making', but uncompromising in its majestic bigness and sweep. He does things with the music which others fail to do. This is overpowering music which only a truly great conductor like Scherchen, who has com-

(Continued on page 167)

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LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

Talks on Music and its Reproduction with the Editor

▲RECENTLY, while looking over some publications of past years, I discovered an article in the January 1935 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* by the noted conductor Leopold Stokowski, called "New Vistas in Radio." In the article Dr. Stokowski outlined every technical facet of transmitted music, and recommended the ideal broadcasting range. This prompted me to approach him regarding his viewpoints on range in recording today, especially because his releases in recent years with "his Orchestra" have been of exceptionally fine tonal quality.

Outlining what I had in mind in a letter to him I was gratified to find him responsive and willing to discuss in detail his theories and convictions, the practicality of which have been demonstrated in the constantly improved recordings that he has made over the long years. Unlike people who grant interviews and talk largely at random, Dr. Stokowski proved most cooperative, and requested that we have several interviews over a period of time, so that both of us would be in accord and satisfied with the completed article.

"I feel that it is important," he wrote in his first letter, "to give the public a clear January, 1953

understanding of the present state of recording and its great future." —Editor

THE increasing interest in "high fidelity" since the war — or, to be more correct, in extended range with low distortion — brings to mind the one man in this country who can rightfully be called the "god-father" of high fidelity in the entire field of reproduced music. This man is the distinguished American conductor, Leopold Stokowski.

Among the great musicians of our time, Dr. Stokowski has been truly unique in his long range concern with reproduced music. Unlike the majority of artists, who leave purely technical aspects of broadcasting or recording to engineers, he has from his earliest association with reproduced music cooperated closely with technicians, and more often than not assisted them with musical advice in regard to the character and quality of reproduction.

During the 1920s and 1930s it was this exceptional musician who — with the engineering staff of RCA Victor — developed and promoted dynamic expansion as well as extended range in recording.

Even today, Stokowski, working with "his Orchestra" — an especially assembled group of the finest musicians in this country (varying from 20 to 95 players depending upon the character of the orchestration) — has assisted in setting a pattern in modern recording which has proved valuable to the engineering staff of RCA Victor. His seating of the orchestra for recording, his extraordinary understanding of dynamics and coloration and — most important — the amount of reverberation essential to the musical composition being performed, proves his mind works in two well disposed channels — those of musical and reproductive values.

Since his childhood, this gifted musician has devoted his life to making music and trying to understand and convey to others its meaning. He is like the insatiable traveller who, not only seeking new and untrammelled territory, returns again and again to familiar places, only to rediscover new vistas and by-paths. He has always queried the divergence between listening to music directly and from reproduction. Like the writer, he foresaw the potentialities of music in reproduction as well as its enduring place in the home and elsewhere, even in the days of acoustic recording.

"Impersonally, always objectively," he said many years ago, "I have tried to find the facts as registered, not alone by the ear, but by instruments of precision."

Worked with Bell Labs

Not all listeners are aware that Dr. Stokowski during the 1930s worked for the ideal extension of range in reproduced music in both radio and recording. In conjunction with Dr. Harvey Fletcher, head of the Division of Sound Experimentation of the Bell Laboratories, and a group of his assistants, Dr. Stokowski conducted endless experiments for a mixed group of musicians, technicians and general listeners to ascertain the best frequency response for transmitting music for the average ear. It was his belief at this time that radio had opened possibilities that might "ultimately revolutionize the whole world of music," and

that these possibilities should not be used capriciously, "but with true artistic motivation and discipline, not only as an end in themselves but as a means to greater freedom and range in expression." He rightfully contended that the frequency range then in use in radio and recording, which extended from 50 to 5,000 cycles per second, was insufficient for faithful reproduction of music.

The Chosen Range

The transmission range which Stokowski believed requisite in operatic and orchestral music included "frequencies and vibrations as rapid as 13,000 per second." The foresight and vision of this extraordinary man can be appreciated when we realize that he advanced this viewpoint as far back as 1934. The chosen range was not an arbitrary one, conceived solely by himself, but resulted from the close and exact tests made by him, Dr. Fletcher and the latter's associates. In his article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Stokowski outlined every technical facet of transmitted music.

It was at this time that he began to urge RCA Victor engineers to make tests with extended range which resulted in a series of recordings which made record history in their day and, even now, are amazing for their balance and rich tonal realism. Though the range was extended on the high end to 10,000 c.p.s. at the recording source, there were reasons which prevented the full range from existing in the finished commercial disc. Record surface noise, ever a besetting condition in the manufacture of shellac composition discs, prevented the retention in the final commercial pressing of the full frequency range acquired at the source. From the early days, transmutation or buffing of matrices, to remove any tics or other engendering noise disturbances, was essential to acquiring a smooth surface. Hence while 10,000 c.p.s. was employed in the original recording, what might be acquired in a commercial pressing could be anywhere from only 6,000 to 8,000 c.p.s. on the high end, depending upon the extent of transmutation found necessary. Undoubtedly, the earliest releases

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had the highest frequencies, while later pressings had slightly less. For instrumental balance, tonal coloration and dynamic range, these recordings were unsurpassed in their time. As most equipment of this period did not produce above 5,000 c.p.s., not all listeners were able to enjoy their realistic qualities. To permit the public to appreciate the liveness of extended range, RCA Victor brought out around this time a high-fidelity phonograph, which seems to have met with only moderate approval, for its sales figures did not justify its continuance in manufacture after a few years.

The two men responsible for this first extended range recording system were Dr. Stokowski and Albert Pulley, Chief Recording Engineer of RCA Victor. It is of interest to know that Dr. Stokowski and Mr. Pulley are also responsible for the "New Orthophonic" recording system, recently adopted by the company, which employs a range from 20 to 13,000 c.p.s., with a higher bass turnover than previously used. The latter is in the region of 650 to 700 cycles.

Landmarks of the Thirties

A few salient examples of recordings made in the 1930s by Dr. Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra might be cited. One of the first sets to startle the record buying public of those days, and the technicians, was the Stokowski-Philadelphia Orchestra release of Stravinsky's *Fire Bird Suite* (set 291 — March 1936). There are many audio technicians of today who value this set for its superior reproductive qualities, as they do several others which I shall name. Dr. Stokowski's performances of the Brahms *First Symphony* (set 301 — May 1936), Franck's *D minor Symphony* (set 300 — March 1937), and Wagner's *Prelude and Good Friday Spell* from *Parsifal* (set 421 — April 1938) offered new realism in tonal qualities which served their respective composers as had nothing before. At this time, nothing similar in recording quality was being accomplished in Europe or elsewhere.

Perhaps the most amazing tonal realism of the period was in Stokowski's per-

formances of his own well known synthesis from Moussorgsky's *Boris Godonow* (set 391 — November 1937), the *Tannhaeuser Overture and Venusburg Music* (set 530 — February 1939) and the widely acclaimed performance of Stravinsky's *Petroushka* (set 574 — September 1939). Record critics of those times, probably working with commercial equipment, were more concerned with performance values than advancements in reproduction. Only in England and France did critics speak about the Stokowski releases in glowing terms for their realistic tonal qualities.

"I still marvel at the results we obtained in the *Petroushka* recording," Stokowski recently said to me. "It was and still is a remarkable achievement."

Envisioning the Future

Though these later 1930 recordings achieved in part what Stokowski desired in reproduction, he was dreaming then of an extended range system which was not to materialize in commercial recordings until the post-war years when English Decca engineers developed the so-called *ffrr* (full frequency range recording) technique. There can be no question of a doubt that had Dr. Stokowski been permitted to achieve the ultimate goal in reproduced music, as he desired it to be after his work with Dr. Fletcher, the "full frequency range recording" system would have emanated instead from one of our leading domestic companies, with his full sponsorship.

"I am happy," Dr. Stokowski says today, "to find that engineers have arrived at a mutual decision on the high end of 13,000 cycles per second, which Dr. Fletcher and I advanced in 1934. Remember, this was not an arbitrary figure. If in the tests we conducted we had discovered that the majority of listeners heard up to 15,000 cycles, we would have chosen that figure as the best on the high end. I have always believed that recording should be made with the widest range of frequencies — even those beyond the hearing zone of the keenest ears — in order that the many over-tones, differentials, and the resultant and trans-

cient tones, might enrich the overall sound.

"For the home product, the 13,000 range is sufficient, but at the source recording can advantageously be made employing the widest frequency range with vibrations up to 25,000 per second. It is possible to do this on tape. The reader might ask — what good are these extended frequencies which the human ear does not hear, particularly when they are cut-off at the half-way point in the finished, commercial record?

"Music is made up of constantly overlapping overtones and undertones, components of the original sounds and their harmonies. These enrich and color the reproduced sound in that part of the frequency range retained, no matter what the cut-off point may be. The higher the frequency range used in recording at the source, the more overtones and differential tones are created, and these, even though not consistently audible, enrich the overall sound."

For those interested in the subject of overtones we recommend Dr. Stokowski's book, *Music For All of Us* (published by Simon and Schuster). The chapter entitled "The Mathematical Foundations of Music" deal fascinatingly with this subject.

Tonal Reflections

One of the most important aspects of recording today is tonal reflections. Realism in reproduced music from radio and recordings in the first decade of electrical reproduction was retarded by a lack of reverberation, or — in some cases — by uncontrolled reverberation which produced overlapping or "echoing" tonal effects. All radio musical broadcasts, until recent years, came from "dead" studios — studios "treated for tonal absorption which," as Stokowski says, "blotted the sound as blotting paper absorbs ink." Long opposed to this procedure, Stokowski worked consistently to get radio to consider broadcasting from acoustically live studios as well as concert halls. Even in recording, the "dead" studio or hall was preferred for a long time to the "live" one. Inasmuch

as "echo" prevailed in many concert halls, particularly when an audience was not present, the problem of draping to eliminate overlapping reverberation was a considerable one. Dr. Stokowski has much to say on this subject.

"In the old days, Bach and Beethoven and all other great musicians accepted the reverberation which accidentally happened as a result of an architect's building design. Unless they visited other concert halls than those with which they were familiar, these musicians became 'ear-conditioned,' so to speak, with the places in which they made music, or in which they heard their own music played most often. Reverberation in varying degrees always existed. It gave liveness to the sound of music.

Visits Bach's Church

"I first became interested in reverberation in relation to music when visiting the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where Bach as cantor played the organ every day in the week. This organ is placed in the center of the church. Seating myself at the console for the first time, I was struck with the excessive reverberation with which Bach had to contend. Later, I learned that the reverberation was close to five seconds in duration. Undoubtedly this seemed normal to Bach because he heard it every day. He was, of course, 'ear-conditioned' to it.

"The longest reverberation I encountered in my travels was at Trinity College in Cambridge, England. Here it was six seconds, which in very loud organ music results in tonal confusion from the many reflecting surfaces. In different frequency zones, reverberation varies. There are five zones in all — extremely high, high, middle, low and extremely low. Today, we are freed from architect's accidents in too much reverberation. The acoustic qualities of a building, especially a concert hall or church, are sometimes taken into serious consideration (they should always be) when the architect designs the building. If the reverberation characteristics at the source — i.e. on the stage — do not give optimum results, these can be rectified

by acoustic screening. One of the finest concert halls in this country — the Greek Peristyle in the Toledo Museum — required rectification of sound distribution from its stage. [The acoustic screen reflector, now in use there, was designed by Stokowski himself many years ago —Ed.]

"Today, in a recording, we can produce any length of reverberation required from extremely long to very short. Recording studios are generally built today with acoustic screening to reproduce the minimum of reverberation. Parenthetically, it should be pointed out that the 'dead' studio of yesteryear is no longer in use in this country. If more reverberation is required after a recording is made, the requisite amount for that particular music can be added at the discretion of the engineer or of the musician. Conversely, if too much reverberation exists in a hall, this can be reduced in certain tonal zones. Thus, the problem of recording in an empty concert hall, which has excessive overlapping sounds resulting in echoes, no longer remains a problem to the engineers.

Today's Realism

"For the first time in the history of music, we are able to hear the work of a great composer performed on records under the most ideal conditions. Every kind of music differs in the amount of reverberation required. Through the years I have made an extensive study of this and in my own recordings I always endeavor to obtain the ideal amount requisite to each individual kind of music. RCA Victor's engineer, Albert Pulley, who always works with me at a recording session, is a master controller of reverberation. He often anticipates the exact amount that I desire in the music being played.

"Let us cite the amount of reverberation in relation to a number of works. Once again, let me say, no degree of sound reflection is arbitrarily chosen by me. Through the long years, visiting countless concert halls throughout the United States, Canada, Central and South America and all the European countries where

I have conducted different orchestras, I have often been amazed how much better various compositions sounded in different places. Ascertaining the amount of reverberation existing in countless halls, I have been able to understand why certain compositions sounded better in one place than in another.

"Take a work like Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. This most certainly profits from performance in a hall which has a long reverberation — all of four seconds. A classical work, for example, like a Haydn symphony, would sound best in a hall which has a short reverberation — about one second. In recording, this can be ideally realized. Bach's music, which requires longer reverberation in the low zones than the high, can be so treated in a recording. And Mozart's music, which needs greater reverberation in the middle and high zones, can also be properly treated in recording. Every composition should be judged separately. A routine system would be fatal.

"This study of absorption with the degree of reverberation is of vital necessity for producing the best sounding records. To accept the existent reverberation in any given concert hall or recording studio as satisfactory to every work of music is an engineering fallacy.

Concert Hall Sound

"As every living room has different acoustic characteristics, so has every concert hall, whether filled or empty. Not long ago a leading recording official stated that 'for recording purposes, the criteria of concert hall sound seem to me the most appropriate.' In one sense, he is absolutely right, but in another he errs, for there are no standard criteria of concert hall sound because every hall has its individual acoustical character. Some listeners favor the quality of sound in records made in Carnegie Hall or the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Others favor the quality of sound in records made in Kingsway Hall in London or that wonderful, acoustically perfect Gewandhaus in Leipzig, or countless other famous edifices. If there is a criterion of sound, it is generally that to which the listener is accus-

tomed in his own 'home town' auditorium, merely a matter of listening habit. The degree of reverberation, unless controlled, varies considerably between all these halls, and not infrequently we find one work ideally suited to one particular place while another work, because of too much or too little reverberation, is not.

"As every living room, or the eventual place in which the recording is to be constantly heard, has different characteristics, reproduction is bound to sound different in different homes. One cannot compare concert hall listening to listening in the home, nor expect the average living room to meet the criteria of any particular concert hall's sound, in reproduction from records. Hence, there are many reasons why it is a fallacy to compare one with the other."

(To be concluded next month)

A GREAT "BORIS"

MOUSSORGSKY: Boris Godounoff (Opera in Prologue and 4 Acts, sung in Russian); Boris Christoff (Boris, Varlaam and Pimen), Eugenia Zareska (Feodor and Marina), Ludmila Lebedeva (Xenia), Lydia Romanova (Nurse and Hostess of Inn), Andre Bielecki (Shuiski and Misail), Kim Borg (Schekalov and Rangoni), Nicolai Gedda (The False Dimitri), Wassili Pasternak (The Fool), Stanislav Pieczora (Nikitich), Gustav Ustinov (Court Boyar), Choeurs Russes de Paris, Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Francaise, conducted by Issay Dobrowen. RCA Victor-HMV LP set WHMV-6400, 4 discs, \$23.80.

▲HAD I HEARD this performance in an opera house. I would have called it a memorable one. To be sure, I am conjecturing on the staging and the acting. However, there is ample evidence in the implied histrionics of the main participants in this record to make one believe they would be most impressive in the opera house. As a recording, this is the finest thing of its kind to emanate from

France, which leads me to believe that English engineers were on hand. It is most realistic, and I recommend that the listener hear immediately the *Coronation Scene* as a fine example of modern, operatic engineering.

The Russian Colony in Paris has long been admired for their musical work; the Choeurs Russes de Paris is a famous group and not a few of these singers must have fame on their own. What the Bolshoi singers and chorus have lost in finesse is apparent in the singing here, and the more fluent and unifying conducting of Dobrowen bespeaks a cultural background that no conductor in Russia has revealed to date on records. Dobrowen's orchestral direction is masterful, strong and cleanly detailed.

Christoff is regarded on the Continent as the true successor to Chaliapin, but I have a feeling his voice would not be quite as impressive in the theatre as his predecessor's was. He makes a wonderful Boris in the recording, both tonally and dramatically, artistically far in advance to Piragoff in the Period and Colosseum sets. (Incidentally, Period and Colosseum by some fluke acquired the same performance which reproductively is best in the Period set.) There is some precedent for Christoff doubling in the role of Varlaam, but not in the role of Pimen. Chaliapin sang both Varlaam and Boris in European productions. In his younger days, it is said he also appeared as Pimen. Doubling in roles prevails in this set with varying results. Christoff is able to differentiate vocally between the three roles he sings. His Pimen is equally impressive with its artistic reserve as his Boris is for its dramatic puissance. His Varlaam is less vulgarly realistic than was Chaliapin's. The women in this production are vocally better than their Russian counterparts in the Period set, with the exception of Lebedeva who sings Xenia. Zareska is an impressive Marina, but not boyish enough for Theodore. Romanova cleverly handles the characters of the Nurse and the Hostess of the Inn by making the former more polished than the latter. Borg and Bielecki in their dual parts are competent. Gedda, as Dimitri,

sings well and gives personality to the character, and Pasternack's Simpleton is good. It is unlikely that we would find an all-around better chosen cast for this opera anywhere today.

There is more of the score here than is usually given in the opera house, though there are some customary cuts — as in the Monastery scene in Act I and in the Garden scene in Act III. The first scene in Act III, in which the Jesuit Rangoni enlists Marina's help to convert Dimitri to their Holy cause, is complete. Rangoni's music is highly effective in its dramatic implications and Borg sings it impressively. The Scene in the Forest prefaces that of Boris' Death Scene, as it usually does in our theatres. Victor has released an operatic performance which should become a classic, a performance which should be enjoyed for years to come.

—P.H.R.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

DONIZETTI: *L'Elisir d'amore* complete); Alda Noni (Adina), Cesare Valletti (Nemorino), Afro Poli (Belcore) Sesto Bruscantini (Dulcamara), Bruna Rizzoli (Giannetta), Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana conducted by Gianandrea Gavazzeni. Cetra-Soria LP set 1235, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲ A SPLENDID recording, comparable to the realistic *Bohème* recently issued by this enterprising company. Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore* is an opera buffa for young singers despite the fact that some of the foremost and most seasoned artists of all times have favored certain of its roles. Here we have young gifted artists, none of whom qualifies as a star ranking above the others. Noni is charming as Adina; Valletti has youthful freshness of voice and can sing with caressing softness where required. The seasoned Poli is the only older member of the cast, but he is a knowing artist. Bruscantini has not as large a voice as most Dulcamara's, but he is believable in his part and a good singer.

January, 1953

L'Elisir d'amore's rather thin plot is not completely implausible considering the status of the characters, the time and the locale. All it needed was the proverbial village priest to disrupt its nonsense. Musically it makes no pretense to rise above comedy. Donizetti wisely kept it light, airy, gay and melodically fluent. It is an opera for youth and for those who like to revel in memories of their youthful days. Mr. Gavazzeni evidently keeps this in mind; his orchestral direction moves with alacrity and sparkle. All in all, this is a good record show.

—P.H.R.

MENOTTI: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*; Chet Allen, Rosemary Kuhlmann, Andrew McKinley, David Aiken, Leon Lishner, Francis Monachino; Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Thomas Schippers. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1701, \$5.72.

▲ AMAHL has certainly made history. The first opera conceived especially for television, it got aired three times in its first year of life, and is already in one major opera company's repertory. There are good reasons for the work's success. Essentially, this opera "plays." It is dramatically simple, sound, touching, believable. With music of even less quality than Menotti's, one suspects people would enjoy looking at it again and again. In the musical theatre, there is nothing so rare as a good libretto nor anything else quite so worthy of cheers. Praise, then, to Menotti; he wrote the book as well as the music. The score, on the other hand, has been called derivative of Puccini, said to be lacking in musical tension, and naively harmonized. For this listener, Menotti's musical weaknesses are easy to hear. I am not sure if one has not seen the television production whether one can maintain a clear mental image of the dramatic pictures. The present performance is a splendidly recorded one of the original cast's excellent work (particularly the light, fluid direction of young Thomas Schippers). For those who saw the Christmas Eve NBC television production, it should surely have much appeal. It is to be hoped that everyone

eventually will get the opportunity to see and hear this opera via television. There is no doubt that *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is here to stay.

—C.J.L.

PUCCINI: *Tosca* (complete); Renata Tebaldi (Floria Tosca), Giuseppe Campana (Mario Cavaradossi), Enzo Mascherini (Baron Scarpia), Dario Caselli (Angelotti), Fernando Corena (Sacristan), Piero Di Palma (Spoletta), Gianfranco Volante (Shepherd Boy), Antonio Sacchetti (Sciarrone and Jailer), Chorus and Orchestra of L'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, conducted by Alberto Erede. London LP set LL-660/61, \$11.90.

▲OF THE five *Toscas* to be heard on LP, Tebaldi's is the best sung. It is a tribute to the soprano's popularity that this set sold out before we received our review copy. London's reproduction is richly sonorous, though not matching some of the bigger effects of the Westminster set. It holds its own in dynamic shadings and balance. None of the five sets has an all around satisfactory group of singers for the main participants, and one's choice will be governed by the character for which one has the greater preference. If this is *Tosca*, I think most would unhesitatingly select Tebaldi, who is a more accomplished singer than Westminster's Dall'Argine and Cetra's Guerrini. Tebaldi does not make the mistake of making her *Tosca* in the opening act a *virago a la Caniglia*, nor does she scream and over-dramatize the second act. Rather she rises to dramatic heights and realism by virtue of her controlled vocalism. How pathetically amateurish seems Remington's Petrova in comparison with her and the others.

If one's interest is centered on Cavaradossi, Gigli is the singer, not alone for the beauty of his voice but for his tonal coloring and ability to sing softly. Campana has youth in his favor, just as Poggi and Scattolini have. The former unfortunately tends to thicken his production, which makes for strain on his top notes. Only Scattolini sings with unimpaired youthful ardor though without recognition of the composer's pianissimo markings. Of the five Scarprias, West-

minster's Colombo has the essential bigness of voice and best conveys the sinister qualities of the character. Mascherini is a musically intelligent interpreter of the role who knows the value of his vocal resources, which assists him in dominating his scenes. In this new set, the lesser characters are competently portrayed, with Corena's Sacristan definitely superior to all others in its relief from overstress of comedy. Of the several orchestral directors, the most successful are Victor's de Fabritiis and Westminster's Quadri, with the former maintaining the better pace throughout. Erede is not always even in his pacing, but he is effective in the dramatic moments, notably in the last act. In the final analysis, this latest *Tosca* has as much to offer as any — more if one considers its reproductive qualities in relation to its artistic ones.

—P.H.R.

VERDI: *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Opera in 3 Acts); Joachim Kerol (Riccardo), Jean Borthayre (Renato), Ethel Semser (Amelia), Loly Valdarnini (Oscar), Marie-Therese Cahn (Ulrica), Lucien Mans (Samuel), Jacques Linsolás (Tom), Giovanni Di Napoli (Silvano), Paris Philharmonic Chorus, Orchestre Radio-Symphonique conducted by Rene Leibowitz. Period LP set SX-207, discs, \$17.85.

▲WHEN you consider the rare operas that have been recorded since the advent of LP records, it seems odd that *Un Ballo in Maschera* has escaped the notice of all companies. Renaissance is now filling this gap with a recorded performance which, if not the last word in authenticity and correct style, at least has its points.

The recording is excellent, and the conducting of Rene Leibowitz radiates life and enthusiasm. The orchestral tone is not the most sumptuous, but this talented conductor gets all he can out of it.

There are two admirable performances in the large cast — the Renato of Jean Borthayre, and the Amelia of Ethel Semser. Borthayre has a really first-class baritone voice. He is the current Rigoletto, Germont, and Amonasro in Paris to-day. His tone is vibrant, his volume

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ample, and his style quite noble. Mme. Semser has a good dramatic soprano voice, which she manages with assurance and ease.

Greatest drawback of this set is the Riccardo of tenor Joachim Kerol. His tone is pinched and his style non-existent. To hear him simulate the laughter of the famous passage *E scherzo od e follia* gave me the sensation of strangling. Loly Valdarnini as the page, Oscar, and Marie-Therese Cahn as the sorceress Ulrica, are perfectly competent.

The cast, which except for Borthayre was unknown to this writer, who has heard a good deal of opera in Paris in the last five years, was obviously assembled in that city. It sings in Italian, which varies from passable to poor. This is hardly the definitive *Ballo*, but it will have to do until a better one comes along.

—M. de S.

Dello Joio's "St. Joan"

DELLO JOIO: *The Triumph of St. Joan Symphony*; **VILLA-LOBOS:** *Erosion or The Origin of the Amazon River*; Louisville Orchestra conducted by Robert Whitney. Columbia LP ML-4615. \$5.45.

IT IS apparent that the Louisville Orchestra performs in a hall that has considerable reverberation in loud musical passages. It makes for appropriate realism in these works and in no way detracts from their musical qualities. It also sustains a fine body of sound from this orchestra, giving the effect of a larger body of players than employed. The Louisville Orchestra, a community organization, maintains a Fund to commission new works. These scores, among a dozen others acquired through the Fund, were given their first performances by the orchestra in November and December 1951.

In the premiere of Norman Dello Joio's *St. Joan* symphony in December 1951, Martha Graham mimed the work, using her own choreography. The puissant dramatic qualities of this score, in which

its gifted composer pays homage to the French maiden who became a saint, stands on its own without the personality of Miss Graham's artistic miming. Indeed, its emotional and reverential qualities are, in my estimation, better suited to abstract listening. There is no specific program. The composer supplies a title to each movement, giving us the clue which incited the inspiration for each. Thus the three movements are called — *The Maid*, *The Warrior*, and *The Saint*. Dello Joio, undeniably one of the most significant contemporary American composers, is a musician whom critics have found difficult to pigeonhole. Having studied with Hindemith, there are those who contend that he has strayed away from his famous pedagogue's fold. This is hardly the case; Dello Joio has followed much of Hindemith's creative formulae and at the same time added a sweetness and light to it, which marks his individuality. His interest in religious subjects is not confined to their devotional aspects, for they are given a universal import. He is a skilled craftsman, both in form and instrumentation. Of Italian parentage, there is no question that his Latin temperament is responsible for his strong emotional appeal.

Villa-Lobos's tone poem, dealing with "the cataclysm of the Amazonas Valley and the uprising of the Andes," is a clever piece of descriptive music utilizing Brazilian musical idioms. It has atmosphere. In its more forceful moments it is emotionally stimulating but more, for the quality of its ingenious orchestration than for its thematic content. It is poles apart from the *St. Joan* work and does not prove as solid musical fare, but it is nonetheless deserving of recording. Mr. Whitney performs both these works handsomely with an unmistakable fervor, implying knowledge of his prior rights to the scores. —P.H.R.

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THE ITALIAN MADRIGAL AT ITS FINEST

GESUALDO: *Madrigals* — *Io pur respiro*; *Felice Primavera* — *Danzan le ninfe*; *Morro lasso*; *Meraviglia d'amore* — *el ardo e vivo*; *Io lacero*; *Merce! grido piangendo*; **MONTEVERDI:** *Madrigals* — *Io mi son gionvinetta*; *Non piu guerra pieltate*; *O Rossignuol*; *Si, ch'io vorrei morire*; *Sorra tenere herbette*; *A un giro sol*; *Ohime*; The Randolph Singers directed by David Randolph. Westminster LP WL-5171, \$5.95.

▲MR: RANDOLPH'S notes rightfully point out that this record "is likely to revise the notions of a great many listeners as to the scope of the madrigal as an art form," inasmuch as it "presents the madrigal in its most dramatic and intense aspects." An astute scholar and a fine musician, Mr. Randolph has selected a group of Italian madrigals by two late 16th-century composers whose harmonic daring in their time made music history. These madrigals qualify as vocal chamber music and were regarded as such in their day. Of the two contemporaries, Monteverdi was the greater genius, a man who brought a freer and more ardent expression to music by a closer attention to the words of the poem. Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, was a daring experimentalist who favored excessive chromaticism which, while often yielding "dynamic-pictorial" effects, frequently created bizarre ones. He remains a controversial figure in music history.

Mr. Randolph has selected well his material from both composers, though the greater subtlety of Monteverdi's art becomes more and more apparent on repeated hearings of the selections of both composers. Gesualdo was a man of violent passions — his ruthless murder of his wife and her lover suggests this, as Randolph points out. The first of his madrigals, *Io pur respiro*, conveys the depths of his passions. One has the feel-

ing that he selected his poems to illustrate in music a personal emotionalism. The second madrigal seeks to express the joy of the vernal season and presents the composer in a different light — one in which he was less adept than Monteverdi. *Morro lasso* has true emotional poignancy; to 20th-century ears its harmonic daring does not offend as it once did. The same thing can be said of *Merce! grido piangendo*, whose stridency gives it real strength of purpose.

In the Monteverdi collection, the first madrigal — *I am young, and I laugh* — is full of youth's elation in spring. The second is a fine example of dramatic tension that the composer could conjure from a poetic text. The third, a heartsick lover's address to a nightingale, brings beauty to a melancholic mood. The fourth, *Si ch'io vorrei morire*, has been called a perfect example of melodic and harmonic declamation, a fine example of the expressive intensity that placed the composer above all others of his time. The motives of the others are given in Mr. Randolph's notes, which cannot fail to help the listener appreciate their unusual qualities.

The performances of these works have unquestionably been carefully prepared. The group of five singers is a flexible one, lyrical in character. Their singing has appeal, though not always the strength that I would have liked in moments of dramatic intensity in the Monteverdi works. While generally well balanced, I find one soprano voice has a tendency to stand out from the ensemble, placing an unnecessary focus on her part. Perhaps this could have been avoided in different microphone placement. However, the overall effect is most impressive, and despite the criticisms noted this disc remains one of the finest things of its kind to be issued to date. I recommend it highly to all who appreciate the art of the madrigal in its greatest form.

—P.H.R.

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Record Notes and Reviews



There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 36* and *Symphony No. 4 in B flat, Op. 60*; New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. Columbia LP disc ML-4596, \$5.45.

▲COLUMBIA claims that this is the longest LP yet made, and no one would doubt it for a minute. Beethoven's *Second* and *Fourth* on one disc — that's progress and value. Especially so, since the sound is natural and full-bodied throughout (quite the best recording Walter has ever had, I believe) and the readings are correct and full of beauty. The *Second Symphony*, with its lovely second movement and finale so full of surprises and so foreshadowing of later great Beethoven, has in my view never had so fine a presentation on records before. Some will prefer more rhythmic drive and a greater continuity of impetus in the *Fourth*, but no one will deny that Walter's conception has plenty of juice and is musically full to the brim.

—C.J.L.

BERLIOZ: *The Damnation of Faust* (suite); *Hamlet, Funeral March*

FRANCK: *Redemption Prelude* to *January, 1953*

Part Two, Orch. of the Paris Conservatory Concert Society conducted by George Sebastian. Urania URLP 7061, \$5.95. **BIZET:** *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2*, (excerpts); **GOUNOD** *Faust*, *ballet music*; **MASSENET:** *Thais*, *ballet music*; L'Orchestre du Theatre National de l'Opera de Paris, conducted by George Sebastian. Urania URLP 7058, \$5.95.

▲THESE familiar excerpts are given a rather heavy and romantic performance redolent of the gilt proscenium and the *ballet de l'opera*. This effect is somewhat enhanced by a limited recording which thumps in the bass. Sebastian is very good at the opera or the *ballet* where his approach is revealed throughout the length of an entire work. In these snippets he is not impressive. One should note that one of the snippets go snipped rather severely. The outside sections of the *Pastorale* from the *Bizet* suite are missing entirely. —D.R.

BERNERS: *Triumph of Neptune — Suite from the Ballet*; **ARNELL:** *Punch and the Child — Ballet Music*; Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Columbia LP ML-4593, \$5.45.

▲BALLET suites apart from the theatre

are often like half cups of tea which have become lukewarm. Both of these ballets are exceptionally well written for the theatre, where the eye supplements the ear. The irresistible nonsense of both these ballets cannot be appreciated from the suites, attractive as they may be in part. Berners' wit is often keen in the *Triumph of Neptune* with its jolly English style in part, but it is his poetic moments which sustain the interest from the record — *Cloudland* and *The Frozen Forest*, two sections which Beecham omitted in his earlier recording. Somehow *The Sailor's Return* with the singer practicing *The Last Rose of Summer* against a polka rhythm isn't as funny as it once seemed — the new singer sounds like he's in his cups.

Personally, I can find no fault with the reproduction of the Berners' suite which sounds well balanced on my equipment, though it seems less representative of its orchestra than recent releases. I think the Arnell ballet has better balanced sound and richer sonority. It may have something to do with the scoring. Arnell is ingenious and definitely original, but his musical inspiration rises and falls. When it's good, it's very good — indeed conveying some deft caricaturing. I suspect I might enjoy the ballet. I doubt that anyone would have served Arnell more advantageously than Beecham.

—P.H.R.

BIZET: *L'Arlesienne Suites Nos. 1 and 2; Symphony No. 1 in C*; Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-1706, \$5.72.

▲THE GENIUS of Stokowski in music requiring subtle coloration and careful instrumental balance is well exploited in his performances of Bizet's *L'Arlesienne* suites. One senses the conductor's love for this music in his moulding of detail and accentuation of inner voices. The genius of Victor's engineers in meeting the conductor's reproductive wishes is also apparent in the natural quality of the sound in which beauty of tone prevails. As performances of this music, these are far ahead of anything we have ever known on records, including Stokowski's earlier efforts with the Phila-

delphia Orchestra. It is appropriate to say that time marches on and, at the same time, to point out that musicians like Stokowski can revalue music long familiar with rewarding artistic puissance.

The recording of the youthful symphony of Bizet is miraculously clear in sound and balance. While the performance is not lacking in rhythmic fluency, the constant attention to adjustments of instrumental effects tends to sectionize the music yet one cannot say the flow is ever needlessly retarded. Others, like Munch and Rodzinski, are more forthright in their performances, though none attest to its youthful verve and ardor more affectionately than does Stokowski. His second movement and finale are especially rewarding.

—P.H.R.

BORODIN: *Prince Igor — Suite*; Philharmonia Orchestra of London conducted by Walter Susskind. MGM LP E3008, \$4.85.

▲ORIGINALLY this company's discs were limited in sound and were hampered by noisy surfaces. Now the surfaces are better and the sound has become quite big. This is particularly true of this recording. While not in the A-1 category, it is undoubtedly faithful. The music, of course, is some of Borodin's best. Only in the *Second Symphony* did he equal the expansive excitement of the *Overture*, the brilliance of the fantastic march and the nostalgic loveliness of the *Polovtsian Dances*. Of the many recorded versions of this music Susskind contributes one of the best. His overture does not have the grandness of Coates' nor his march the bite of Beecham's but, on LP, he has no competition. Fricsay is his main competitor. The latter wins by a hair but Susskind is not far behind. In addition he presents this very interesting "suite" and that should influence the prospective buyer.

—D.R.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*; Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-1702, \$5.95.

▲TOSCANINI'S 1942 recording of this symphony made record history. Of course,

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this new version is better reproduced yet not too startlingly so. It is, however, ahead of other recent Toscanini releases except the Beethoven *Ninth*. The performance has clarity of line and detail, and that masterful control which is the Toscanini hallmark. While I admire the maestro's rendition of this work, especially for its forthright characteristics, I still think he misses the point of Brahms' marking of the introduction. It is as much a matter of mood as tempo. Klemperer, who otherwise was straightforward in his performance of this symphony, took the introduction at too slow a pace — Toscanini hurries it. Toscanini accentuates dramatic power throughout the work, even in the *Andante sostenuto* and the *Allegretto* where others are less tense. Except for the introduction, Toscanini's first movement is most satisfying as its dramatic strength does not stress the struggling, gloomy qualities which others do. There is a humanity in Brahms which invites more ardor and glow in the next two movements than we find here, though this can be done at the expense of sentiment. The finale is masterfully handled with none of the distortion of rhythmic patterns which others pursue. I have never heard the performance of Brahms' *First* with which I would unequivocally consign myself to listening for all time. But this performance is one I definitely want in my record library. —P.H.R.

DELIUS: *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring; Summer Night on the River; Intermezzo and Serenade from Hassan; Caprice and Elegy for Cello and Orchestra; Prelude to Irmelin*; Felix Slatkin conducting the Concert Arts Orchestra. Capitol LP P-8182, \$6.98.

▲WHILE the recorded quality is live, the balance is not ideal for music of this kind. There is a sharpness of tone on the high end, often disturbing to the poetic qualities of Delius' music. The performances are carefully planned and worked out — all the notes are in place, but the conductor lacks the charm that Beecham and Geoffrey Toye brought to their performances of Delius. The fine-spun poetic sentiment of this composer asks for delicate nuancing of line which Beecham

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knows so well how to achieve. Mr. Slatkin's rendition of that exquisite Intermezzo for spring — *On Hearing the First Cuckoo* — rhythmically "rocks" too much to sustain the almost dreamlike mood conjured by the composer. The conductor does not heed the composer's marking, "With easy flowing movement." The balance of the program is well enough played, but not well enough to erase memories of Sir Thomas' performances which are overdue on LP. If you are impatient for some Delius on LP, this disc will serve you until Sir Thomas plays these works again or his earlier versions are transferred to LP. —J.N.

GOTTSCHALK-KAY: *Cakewalk*; Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. **GOULD:** *Fall River Legend Suite*; New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP disc ML-4616, \$5.45.

▲JUST two years after its premiere, there seems no question that Hershey Kay has created in *Cakewalk* a real American classic. In a similar manner to Caneteloube who arranged, orchestrated, and made memorable the *Songs of the Auvergne*, Kay has taken Gottschalk's reminiscences and actual notations of the tunes for 19th century New Orleans' cakewalking babies and given them a lively and fanciful sound that should make them standard musical currency for as long as people have interest in music and early American folklore. Gottschalk is a new name for most listeners, I imagine. Extraordinary man, really. Born in New Orleans in the first half of the 19th century, he was among the first notable American concert pianists. He played 80 concerts during one year in New York City alone, toured mining towns, played for communities of farmers, in addition to all other major urban centers. He studied composition in this country, and in France with Berlioz, who considered him to possess an unusual talent. *Cakewalk* was commissioned by the New York City Ballet in 1930 for an accompaniment to Ruthanna Boris' delightful choreography. The work has won great favor and is yet an-

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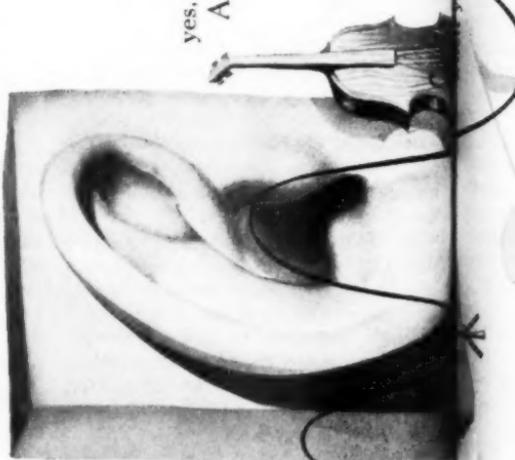
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other of that magnificent company's rich delights. The performance and recording of this wonderful score are superb, and I suspect that everyone — Ormandy, the Philadelphians, and the Columbia engineers — had a jolly time preserving it for us. I wouldn't miss it if I were you.

It will be said that a more suitable discmate could have been found for *Cakewalk*. Very likely so, but unfortunately there is nothing available that I know of that has similar musical character and substance. Be that as it may, Morton Gould's *Fall River Legend* is the companion and that's that. It is the music, as you will remember, for Agnes de Mille's ballet about Lizzie Borden, the New Englander who "gave her mother forty whacks," etc. It is well made, expertly orchestrated, and supports choreography well enough. However, it is highly derivative of Copland and without the necessary emotional impulse to sustain its devices. Something of a bright-colored, masterfully made shell it is — quite hollow inside. Mitropoulos and his men play it correctly and fervently. Columbia has provided a fine recording which is unfortunately disturbed by a periodic swish throughout the second and third sections. —C.J.L.

HERBERT: *Irish Rhapsody, Pan Americana, American Fantasy*; Philadelphia Pops Orchestra condusd by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia 10" LP disc AAL-21, \$2.85.

▲IT is worth hearing this well recorded disc if only to remind one how much orchestral programming has improved over the past 20 years. Herbert's sweet and noisy pieces — such as the three at hand — used to get regular workouts by our best symphonic organizations. So beautifully are they played here, however, that some may want them for nostalgic purposes. —C.J.L.

HANDEL (arr. Harty); *Water Music Suite*; **MOZART:** *Overture to The Marriage of Figaro*; **SCHUMANN:** *Overture to Genoveva*; Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor 10" LP LM-7009, \$4.67.

HANDEL (arr. Harty): *Water Music*

Suite and Royal Fireworks Music; London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty. Columbia Entre LP RL-3019, \$3.08.

▲THE RECORDING in the Victor disc suggests several sessions with slightly different setups. Munch seems to have been on a rampage when he conducted these several works. Tempi are accelerated and the playing of the orchestra suggests the players were working with a will but not with the old finesse associated with the Boston Symphony. The tonal quality tends to coarseness. I include Harty's long cherished recording of the *Water Music* here because it still remains a model for the performance of this delightful music in which the spirit of Handel breathes freely without getting out of breath. Munch paces the whole suite too fast. Harty substantiates its grace and strength. True, the recording in the Harty disc is dated, but I must admit its transfer to LP surprises me. It lacks the sheen and bloom of modern high fidelity, but it still has good sound which commands respect because of the knowing absorption of the conductor with Handel's music — both in the *Water Music* and the *Royal Fireworks*.

Mozart's overture gets a vigorous workout from Munch, and Schumann's overture, which has been aptly called a strong chivalrous piece, loses some of its chivalrous characteristics in Munch's boisterously agitated unfoldment. A strange program! —P.H.R.

HAYDN: *Symphonies Nos. 12, 23, 29 and 30*; Chamber Orchestra of the Vienna State Academy of Music conducted by Wilhelm Loibner. Lyric chord LL36, \$5.95.

▲THESE four early works, presented in an excellent recording, well above this company's usual standard, were written between 1763 and 1765, when the composer was quite mature. They display a tenderness and a wit which is not at all incompatible with the later symphonies. All of these four are well worth hearing but those to which one will probably turn most often are the 30th in *C major*, called the "Alleluja" (its first

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movement uses a Gregorian Easter melody), and the 29th in *E major*, which possesses a menuet trio of the utmost beauty and serenity. It, like the trio of the menuet of the 88th is at once lovely and disturbing, a rare and beautiful phenomenon in Haydn. The performance is right in the period. Even the orchestra has been whittled down to size and Loibner does all these works full justice.

—D.R.

MENDELSSOHN: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — *Incidental Music*; **DEBUSSY:** (arr. Busser); *Petite Suite*; **RAVEL:** *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; Fritz Reiner conducting the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-1724, \$5.72.

▲THE RECORDING of both orchestras is excellent. Reiner's performance of the Mendelssohn music is finespun, lyrically delicate and rhythmically fluent. His adjustment and balancing of instrumental timbres is expertly handled. He does not bring to this music the vitality that Toscanini does and there is less contrast between the overture and the scherzo than others make, as though there were a dream aura about the music with elfin figures lightly dancing but leaving no footprints. The performances of the Debussy and Ravel suites are exquisitely detailed, lyrically gracious and tonally lovely. Such impeccable musicianship deserves unqualified praise. There are no LP competitors to Reiner's Debussy and Ravel.

—P.H.R.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 5 in C sharp-minor*; Bruno Walter conducting the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of N.Y.; Eight Songs; Desi Halban (soprano) with Mr. Walter at the piano. Columbia LP set SL-171, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲COLUMBIA engineers have done a first-rate job on the reproduction which in the original 78 rpm release was far from satisfactory in balance. This earlier recording, however, does not convey the impact of the music like the new Scherchen performance. It does on re-hearing

sustain my belief that Walter comes closest to the heart of Mahler's music than any other conductor of our time whom I have heard conduct the works of Mahler. The scherzo of the *Fifth* is the true heart of the symphony, its finest movement despite the popularity of the poetic *Adagietto*. Walter's rendition of the scherzo appeals to me more than Scherchen's. Elsewhere, I think Scherchen with his dramatic forcefulness, backed by the realism of Westminster's recording, offers more vital listening. It is difficult not to be sound-wise in musical matters that involve symphonic orchestration like Mahler devised; clarity and balance are assets which point up any conductor's performance, and in these matters Scherchen is best served.

The Halban-Walter group of songs is definitely challenged today by other releases. Miss Halban's light voice suits the material chosen, but Mr. Walter's piano accompaniments are poorly balanced.

—P.H.R.

“**New Year**” Concert 1953 — *Waltzes and Polkas* by Johann and Josef Strauss; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Clemens Krauss. London LP LL-683, \$5.95.

▲THOUGH recorded long before New Year's day, this program was given on the first of January in Vienna by Krauss and the Vienna Philharmonic. It is an appropriate concert for the Viennese capitol; one to which Krauss does notable justice. And (need it be said?) London's engineers have done full honors to conductor and orchestra. It's a program that anyone will enjoy hearing, when one's mood asks for lighthearted music with a lilt, any time of the year. —J.N.

SCHUBERT-WEINGARTNER: *Symphony in E*; Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Franz Litschauer. Vanguard LP disc VRS 27, \$5.95.

▲IN a manner of speaking, it's not often one gets a chance to hear a “new” Schubert symphony. But this disc will afford the opportunity to many. The *E Major Symphony* was actually Schubert's seventh. Composed in 1821, this work is in four

movements — and introductory *adagio* and an *allegro*, an *andante*, a *scherzo* and *rio*, and an *allegro giusto* finale. Up to the 110th bar of the first movement, Schubert had fully scored and marked his sketch but hereafter there are merely memoranda, perfectly complete and orderly, however. Every bar is drawn in the *tempi* and names of instruments fully written at the beginning of each movement, nuances all marked, and there is a bold "fine" at the conclusion. As Sir George Grove comments: "Schubert evidently regarded the work as no less complete on paper than it was in his mind."

In 1934, Felix Weingartner reconstructed the scene with an appropriate sense of style leaving the second and third movements untouched, and tightening up the corner section. Altogether an admirable piece of work!

The symphony itself has a powerful and concentrated introduction, followed by an *allegro* more akin to the prevalent Italian style of the day than to Beethoven. This section, the *scherzo* and *trio*, and the finale have good but not outstanding melodic material loosely developed in a way that offers the listener few long sustained flights of fancy and little feeling of continuity.

The playing of this work by the Viennese forces under Litschauer and the recording by Vanguard are all that could be asked. Much loving care has attended the presentation of this interesting sketch of Schubert. The disc deserves attention.

—C.J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 4 in D minor*; **BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 4 in B flat*; San Francisco Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1716, \$5.72.

▲THIS moderately well recorded version of two popular masterworks represents good value in terms of number of minutes of music per dollar spent. It is a pity the readings and playing are no better than they are. One has come to expect that Monteux will make the San Francisco Orchestra play better than it often

does under anyone else. On this occasion, however, the results are disappointing. There is the presence of Monteux's animating spirit, to be sure, but there is also a goodly portion of slightly ragged attacks, some un-unanimous playing, and occasional straying from pitch by solo wind and brass players.

For the sake of contrast between outspoken and lyric passages, Monteux has interrupted the continuity of the first movement of the Schumann symphony and turned it into a series of individually interesting but seemingly unrelated episodes. The second movement is slack, the third (except for the trio) is rushed and a little graceless. The Beethoven symphony is read to perfection except for the finale which is taken at the fastest pace I can remember, one that is far from Beethoven's direction *allegro ma non troppo*.

—C.J.L.

SPOHR: *Symphony No. 3 in C minor*, Op. 78; Symphony Orchestra of Radio Frankfurt conducted by Georg Schlemm. Urania 10" LP 5008, \$4.75.

▲THE RECORDING is unusually smooth and properly resonant considering its radio source. The performance is a good one, smooth and efficient. The music suggests early Beethoven without the boldness of the latter. Spohr's themes are malleable though lacking in strong profiles. A first-rate craftsman, he handles his material capably. The annotator fails to point out that the composer employed unifying experiments in this symphony by making references to them in other movements. Probably a daring procedure in its time, these experiments are hardly apprehended, much less remembered. The work lacks variety of mood both in style and movements. The scholar may commend the composer's adroit musicality, but the listener may find the going a bit dull in this day, with so many fine works on record. —P.H.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Capriccio Italien*, Op. 45; *Theme and Variations from Suite No. 3 in G*, Op. 55; Carl Schuricht conducting the Orchestra of the Paris Conservatory Concert Society. Los-

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▲LONDON engineers have responded to the challenge of the Beecham recording of the *Capriccio Italien*. This is vivid reproduction with brilliant solo instrumental display. Schuricht's performance is more solid than Beecham's but equally successful in its way. One might say it is more traditional. Thrilling in sound, and cleanly and clearly detailed, this version of Tchaikovsky's Italian holiday piece is going to make a lot of listeners tone-happy. Though the complete *Suite No. 3* is available in a first-rate performance (Concert Hall 1144), Schuricht's finely moulded rendition of its most famous movement is well worth hearing. Moreover, it is a better recording.

—P.H.R.

TSCHAIKOVSKY: *Hamlet; Romeo and Juliet*; Philharmonia Orchestra of London conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. MGM LP E3002, \$4.85.

▲FISTOULARI'S way with Tschaikovsky is well-known. An able theatre man he has turned in the most balletic performances of *Swan-Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* on discs. It is not surprising that his renditions of these two overture-fantasias sound like dance music. *Hamlet* — in itself so suggestive of the dance that Helpmann used it for his well-known ballet — is an expertly written score which, more or less in the pattern of the composer's other Shakespearian pieces, contrasts themes representative of the main characters. Ophelia thus becomes a charming Russian maiden and the Dane is more choleric than melancholic. Boult makes them a lot more British and also a bit phlegmatic. Rachmilovich makes them somewhat frantic. In the *Romeo and Juliet*, the lovers seem less happy under Fistoulari, perhaps because they were so elegiacally beautiful under Toscanini. The two families are more petulant than ever but, unfortunately, at the expense of the few peaceful moments the lovers enjoy together. The recording is not absolutely first-rate but it is quite satisfactory.

—D.R.

WAGNER: *Der Ring des Nibelungen, Orchestral Highlights, Volume I and II*;

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Orchestra of the Munich State Opera conducted by Franz Konwitschny. *Urania* LP disc, URLP 7063 and 7065 \$5.95 each.

▲PERHAPS one of the reasons for the unfavorable impression created by these discs is the fact that they are unevenly recorded. In the first volume the Valkyries' ride has a rather small sound and the gods going into Valhalla fairly boom; the detail of the magic fire is somewhat obscured and the *Siegfried Idyll* — which somehow finds a place among the "Ring highlights" — suffers from an untoward harshness of tone. In the second volume the Act III scene-change music from *Siegfried* has a nice full sound but the hero creeps along the Rhine at an unusually low sound level. His funeral music again sounds nice but the finale from the opera, *Goetterdaemmerung*, contains too much sound for this recording to cope with. The excerpts from *Parsifal*, the prelude and *Good Friday* music, which make up the odd face on this set are much better recorded. Konwitschny, remembered for his work in this company's complete *Tristan*, obtains his effects from an over-all musical approach and these samplings do not do him justice. — D.R.

Concerto

JABOBI: *Concerto for Violin; Concertina for Piano and String Orchestra; Night Piece — Dance*; Andre Gertler (violin), Irene Jacobi (piano), Francis Stoeffs (flute), *Orchestre Symphonique del'Institut National Belge de Radio diffusion* conducted by Franz Andre. Spa records LP 7 \$5.95.

▲FREDERICK JACOBI was one of America's most distinguished composers believing in expression above modernity. Tonality, rather than atonality remains the basis of his workmanship. Yet, in the Violin Concerto, his harmonic structure takes on a "modern" flavor though its idiom is neo-romanticism. It is a well-constructed work, well written for the soloist, but lacking in a truly dis-

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tinative profile. Mr. Gertner gives it an expressive and efficient performance. The supple, mettlesome and well constructed Concertino has a more distinctive profile and deserves to be widely known and oftener performed. The composer's wife is the proficient and expressive soloist. The Night Piece and Dance have Hebraic qualities, a suggestion of orientalism in coloring. Stoess's performance does justice to the moods of the music. Franz Andre's direction of the orchestra forces proves his versatility and workmanlike understanding of music is by no means confined to one school. The recording suggests a radio studio; its realism would have profited in balance and tone by more reverberation. —P.H.R.

MENDELSSOHN: *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*; Yehudi Menuhin (violin) and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwangler; *Concerto in D minor*; Mr. Menuhin and RCA Victor String Orchestra. RCA Victor LP LM-1720, \$5.72.

▲THE QUALITY of the recording in the *E minor Concerto* gives the edge in realism to the soloist, otherwise the reproduction is excellent. The balance between soloist and string orchestra in the *D minor Concerto* seems exactly right. The feature of this disc is the *D minor Concerto*, a forgotten work which Mendelssohn wrote in his fourteenth year, the manuscript of which was recently acquired by Menuhin. The work definitely heralded a precocious youth, but in quite a different manner than his three-year-later *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture. It is completely classic in style and concept — a sort of interspersing of Mozart and Bach. Listening to this attractive music, one thinks of a composer in his twenties rather than his 'teens. Melodically, it is gracious and fluent and at no time is the music lacking in inspiration. Menuhin, in the dual role of violinist and conductor, acquires himself with honors. His playing of the solo part is fine spun — tonally smooth and gratiating.

Menuhin's performance of the familiar *E minor Concerto* stands up favorably

with the best on LP. His playing is tonally expressive and rhythmically fluent. I would rate this as one of his best phonographic performances. Furtwangler's orchestral direction is well adjusted though curiously restrained in some sections. Soloist and conductor achieve a poetic poise in the slow movement, however, that is most impressive. The Heifetz-Beecham and Campoli-Van Beinum performances offer strongest competition. Though strongly drawn to the present rendition, I still esteem the latter highly.

—P.H.R.

PROKOFIEV: *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D, Op. 19*; Ricardo Odnoposoff (violin) with Radio Zurich Orchestra conducted by Heinrich Hollreiser.

STRAVINSKY: *Concerto for Piano and Wind Orchestra*; Newton-Wood (piano) with members of the Residentie Orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr. Concert Hall LP disc CHS-1160, \$5.95.

▲AFTER having heard most of Pro-

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kofiev's output, one is likely to feel that his *First Violin Concerto* is one of the two or three finest things he accomplished and may entertain the notion that it is the best concerto for a stringed instrument composed during our century. The work has assuredly stood the test of its own time. So too, in its way, has its great performance by Joseph Szigeti and Sir Thomas Beecham, now happily available to us on LP (Columbia). This new recording gives one quite a bit more of the sound than its famous competitor, but the old recording is not afflicted with the kind of distortion that is present at the beginning and here and there throughout the rest of the new disc. I am also not especially happy with the balance in either the recording or the performance. And there is insufficient bite in the second movement, a use of too much sugary rubato in the lyric passages in the corner movements, and too great a revelation of the work's section joints.

Far better, artistically and mechanically viewed, is the recording of Stravinsky's solid, neo-classical *Concerto for Piano and Wind Orchestra*. Composed in 1923 and first performed at one of the Concerts Koussevitzky in 1924, this work in Stravinsky's own words is "the seventeenth century viewed from the standpoint of today." The work, in three movements, is rhythmically quite varied, lean of sound, and harmonized in pan-diatonic secundal fashion. It receives a clean, clear performance of no especially expensive finish. —C.J.L.

Strauss: *Burleske; DOHNANYI: Variations on a Nursery Theme*; Fabienne Jacquinot (piano) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. MGM LP E3004, \$4.85.

LISZT: *Totentanz; RIMSKI-KORSAKOV: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*; Fabienne Jacquinot (piano) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. MGM 10" LP E182, \$3.

▲THE SOLOIST in these records, a French woman in her middle twenties, belongs to the loud-and-fast school of

modern pianism that attacks every score with unlimited confidence but little discrimination. These discs are also typical of the less salutary aspects of the LP industry, in which the promise of interesting scores outside the narrow confines of the standard repertoire is negated by indifferent performance and mediocre recording.

All four of these pieces have their points; they also suffer from unevenness. I personally have a soft spot for the *Burleske* of Richard Strauss, an early score quite free from the inflated enormities of that composer's later efforts. Rimski's piece offers the least meat, Liszt's the greatest amount of frustration.

Fistoulari's contribution shows little awareness of the finer points of accompanying. His orchestra seems carelessly rehearsed, displays a coarse tone. The general feeling is one of bad-tempered exhaustion, which is not aided by the artificially dry, shrill sound of the recording.

—A.W.P.

The Dohnanyi *Variations* are better played by Cyril Smith and Sargent on Columbia LP 4146, the Liszt by Brailowsky and Reiner on Victor LM-1195, and the Rimski concerto by Badura-Skoda on Westminster 5068. —Ed.]

THOMSON: *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra; The Mother of Us All — Suite for Orchestra*; Luigi Silva (cello), Janssen Symphony Orchestra of Los Angeles conducted by Werner Janssen. Columbia LP disc ML-4468, \$5.45.

▲HERE is a clean recording of no outstanding merit that serves acceptably two routine performances by the adventurous and valuable Janssen group. The Janssen direction is straightforward, but without any special care for blending and balancing that marks the work of our finest orchestral leaders. Attacks and releases, phrasing, and other musical amenities are about what one ordinarily encounters. Luigi Silva's tone is of small caliber but he uses it in the most artistic manner. His cello never groans or grunts, it sings in a fiery, light manner.

The *Cello Concerto* is a recent work of composer-critic Virgil Thomson. In

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E.M.G. Review; London

"One is reminded of the great Caruso."

Peter Hugh Reed; American Record Guide

"It would be foolish to deny the manly strength of his singing; the unflagging vigor with which he goes through a role."

Irving Kolodin; Saturday Review

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Manon Lescaut—Pazzo son, quadrate (Puccini)

Turandot—Non piangere Liu (Puccini)

Traviata—De miei bollenti spiriti (Verdi)

Luisa Miller—Quando le sere al piacido (Verdi)

Macbeth—Ah la paterna mano (Verdi)

*with Orchestra of L'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome
Conductor: Alberto Ercole



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troduced in 1950, it is in three movements — quick, slow, quick. It is pandiatonic as to harmony, rhythmically varied in Thomson's characteristically subtle manner, and superbly orchestrated. It uses imagined and actual folk material in large measure and owes much in this respect (as does many another similar American composition) to Charles Ives. Particularly effective is the use of a hymn tune, *Tribulation*, with variations in the second movement. Except for its repetitiveness, the last movement is a delight. The two leading themes here are a tune from Beethoven's *Violin Sonata, Op. 12*, No. 2 and *Yes, Jesus Loves Me*.

The Mother of Us All, an opera by Thomson set to words by Gertrude Stein, is one of the great modern theatre works. It seems a pity that Thomson should have tried to use bits of it to make an orchestral "paraphrase" not unlike those our grandfathers used to listen to — things like *Rigoletto*, *La Boheme*, *La Traviata*, etc., *ad infinitum*, each in fifteen minutes. *The Mother of Us All Suite* is, I am afraid, a grab bag; and, for one who knows the complete opera, a rather serious disappointment. Why not the whole opera, somebody? The Alice Ditson Foundation has a perfectly fine private recording of an actual performance.

—C.J.L.

Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *The Ten Sonatas for Violin and Piano*; Joseph Fuchs (violin) and Artur Balsam (piano). Decca LP set DX-150, 5 discs, \$29.25.

▲THE DEGREE to which realism can be achieved in reproduction in a duo group is amazingly exploited in this set. From extended range equipment, one has the illusion that on turning one's head the artists might be seen. It is unfortunate that intermittent ticks prevail throughout the set on almost every record face; they rudely remind us that the machine separates us very definitely from the artists.

It has become increasingly evident

that domestic Decca is contributing some of the foremost LP chamber releases. While the present set is not listed as a Society issue, it might well have been. The records, housed in a box, are accompanied by a booklet containing understanding notes and the printed music of each sonata. The set is marked "Limited Autograph Edition" and each volume is numbered and signed by the artists.

Fuchs and Balsam are a splendid team — two of the finest musicians in their field now before the public. Fuchs is often called a musician's musician, which in his case is completely complimentary. His musicality is extraordinarily sharp and clean, rhythmically assured and strong. He lacks true suavity of tone and, like other artists of a dominant personality, he often sacrifices tone for interpretation. Thus, at the opening of the "Kreutzer," his is a more wirey tone than was Heifetz's. But make no mistake, Fuchs and Balsam substantiate the strength and power of Beethoven. Their playing is forthright, technically competent and ever assured. They understand the music and take no flagrant liberties. They are best in the fast movements where their playing has rhythmic strength. The slow movements suggest an emotional reticence, as though intellect prevailed. Their performances are more virile than Rostal and Osborn, who are evidently playing the entire sonata series for London and making a good job of it too.

Back in the 1930s, Kreisler and Rupp recorded all ten sonatas for an H.M.V. Society issue. For Parlophone in England, Goldberg and Kraus made four of the ten which Decca re-released in this country. It was originally rumored that these artists were to do the complete series, a project which regrettably was not fulfilled. Fuchs and Balsam give more compelling performances of the later works from the *C minor*, *Op. 30*, No. 2 onward. I miss the suavity and subtlety of phrasing which Goldberg and Kraus brought to the "Spring" sonata, and to *Op. 11*, No. 2 and *Op. 30*, No. 1. No one has quite equaled Kreisler and Rupp in their gracious playing of the *A minor*, *Op. 23*.

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— the unjustly neglected member of the family. And in the three sonatas of both *Op. 12* and *Op. 30*, Kreisler and Rupp play beautifully, though their artistry lacks the liveness of the Fuchs and Balsam reproduction. No matter what one's admiration is for the performances of others, this set offers a unique musical experience, the like of which may never be duplicated.

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas for Violin and Piano, Op. 30, No. 1 in A major, Op. 23 in A minor*; Jean Fournier (violin) and Ginette Doyen (piano). Westminster LP WL5164, \$5.95.

▲ IN THE matter of recording alone this disc represents the best of these sonatas' LP appearances. Both instruments are given equal attention and their tone remains consistently realistic. It is one of the best violin, piano recordings in a long time. The matter of performance will remain one of personal considerations. These are extremely sensitive interpretations stressing the elegiac and often whimsical aspects of the works, and underplaying the more monumental concepts also present. In this the performance of the *Op. 23* much resembles that of Francescatti and Casadesus. The "hunting music" aspect of the first movement is stressed and the subtle humor of the second is considered before anything else. In this, Fournier's interpretation is quite different from that of Fuchs whose idea of the work is a much larger one. *Op. 30* contains a particularly lovely song-like slow movement and this Fournier and Doyen practically illuminate. Fuchs is the more powerful on the two outside movements. For those who, like me, believe the true beauty of these sonatas lies in their penitve gravity and their naive good humor, the present disc claims attention.

—D.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Cello Sonatas in F, Op. 5, No. 1 and in G minor, Op. 5, No. 2*. Westminster LP WL-5170, \$5.95. **BEETHOVEN:** *Cello Sonata in A, Op. 69; Variations on Mozart's "Bei Maennern"*. Westminster LP WL-5173, \$5.95. Played by Antonio Janigro (cello) and Carlo Zecchi (piano).

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▲ THE PROPORTIONS and balance of the reproduction are lifelike. These performances are of high artistic standards, representative of that type of co-partnership which was achieved by Casals and Horszowski, and Feuermann and Hess. Janigro is ever attentive to musical values. His tone is firm, rich in sound, and always secure to pitch. The manner in which he draws forth a long, sustained tone from his instrument is true artistic assurance. Zecchi, one of Italy's leading pianists, brings a welcome graciousness to his performances, a natural fluency that frees the piano from the role of mere accompanist. There is no misapplied assertiveness in his playing. When artists get together like these in superior recording, comparison with others does not suggest itself. There are times when one rightfully desires to forget other performances, to live the moments with those at hand as so often happens in the concert hall. The recordings of Starker and Bogin are not at hand; they will invite — nay, demand — comparison.

—P.H.R.

GIBBONS: *Two Fantasias*; **LOCKE:** *Consort of Fowre Parts* (No. 6); **PURCELL:** *Paran and Chaony*; The New Music String Quartet. Bartok Records LP disc BRS-913, \$5.95.

▲ A PERFECT disc from every point of view. A superb recording with just the right small-room resonance and spatial distance enhances impeccable playing by our fine New Music String Quartet, a young American ensemble everyone should be proud of. All pieces here date from around the beginning of the 17th century when England's best music was the world's most vigorous and fanciful. Much of this fine work was created for a "consort of viols," which was available and the pride of many English burghers and aristocrats of that day. The pieces under consideration — presented here as written except for a transposition up a fourth — most resemble (to choose something most serious record collectors will remember) the four and five part fantasias of Purcell, which have long been admired since Columbia recorded them

almost two decades ago. Decidedly free in form and expressively as personal as a toothbrush, these grand and touching works have been neglected for more than three centuries. Gratitude is due those instrumental in presenting them to us in such handsome and resplendent fashion.

—C.J.L.

HAYDN: *Quartet, Op. 3, No. 5*; **Mozart:** *Quartet in B flat, K. 159*; Griller String Quartet. London 10" LP disc LS-656, \$4.95.

▲EXCELLENT recording of beautiful performances of two rarely heard works. The famous serenade in the Haydn quartet is the only familiar music here. The rest of this work is first rate, especially the vivacious first movement, and attests to the ease, maturity, and mastery the great Austrian master had attained by the 1750s. The B flat quartet, created by Mozart at the age of sixteen, is notable mainly for an unusually skillful and passionate second movement written in the composer's beloved G minor. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Serenade No. 10 in B flat, K. 361*; The Los Angeles Woodwinds conducted by William Steinberg. Capitol LP P-8181, \$4.85.

▲IF YOU are not familiar with this work, don't be fooled by the title. This is no inconsequential serving of pleasant little tunes, but a score as important, in many ways, as any of the big Mozart symphonies. In seven movements, it calls for thirteen players, including two bassoon horns, an early form of alto clarinet. The actual structural development of the piece does not exceed the requirements of the serenade form, yet the over-all impact is completely formal, serious and of no little depth.

Steinberg's players are good ensembles; they have been carefully prepared by a meticulous workman. Solo passages, however, lack the genuine solo flavor, and the group tone is thinner and more nasal than the best efforts of German and Austrian woodwind operatives. The best recording of this piece is on 78 rpm discs by soloists of the Vienna Philharmonic under Furtwängler (HMV DB-6707/11), a wonderful example of secure

and relaxed playing by experts.

Of the three LP discs available, none is completely satisfactory. Koussevitzky's effort (Victor LM-1077), lacking the second and fifth movements, is heavy-handed and overly fat in sound. The Hewitt Chamber Orchestra (Vox 6020), a French outfit, being often quite out of tune, is less preferable than a Viennese wind group (Vox 7470).

If you must have LP, this new disc looks like the best bet. The recording is satisfactory, the playing good, and the tempi acceptable, though somewhat flabby in places.

—A.W.P.

SCHUMANN: *Quartet No. 1 in A minor, Op. 41*; *Quartet No. 3 in A major, Op. 41*; Curtis String Quartet. Westminster LP WL-5166, \$5.95.

▲EXCELLENT recording with just the right amount of reverberation for presence. The performances are well balanced. This ensemble is tonally well matched and of a single mind in interpretative intentions. There is ample evidence that their performances have been carefully worked out. Their rendition of the *A major* with its greater romantic warmth has more tonal glow and more enthusiasm; their playing of the *A minor* is lacking in the enthusiasm that others — the old Roth Quartet, for example — brought to this music. Schumann's quartets are not easy to perform, a fact of which the Curtis group does not remind us, for their musicianship is solid and assured. This being the best performance of the *A major* on LP, the acquisition of this disc is recommended. Curtis Quartet should consider recording the unjustly neglected *F major Quartet, Op. 41, No. 2* to complete the series.

—P.H.R.

SCHUMANN: *Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 63*; **SCHUBERT:** *Nocturne in E flat, Op. 148*; Leopold Mannes (piano) Bronislav Gimpel (violin), Luigi Silva (cello). Decca LP disc DL9604, \$5.85.

▲CLEAN, natural sound is the contribution of Decca engineering here. Solid musicianship and scholarly temperament are the Mannes-Gimpel-Silva Trio's musical achievements. Both works are

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new to LP. The Schumann *Trio*, loosely constructed but evidencing wistful charm and emotional power here and there, has not been available since the Cortot Thibaud-Casals recording of a quarter century ago. As far as I know, the Schubert *Nocturne* has never been available on records in the United States before. This product of 1826, the year of the great *Trio in B flat, Op. 99*, is entirely new to your reporter. It is not especially memorable. To be sure, there is the ever interesting Schubertian device of alternating powerful episodes with lyric effusions. But on this occasion, there is no sustained tension and the basic theme will not withstand the tortuous though interesting modulations which they are put through.

—C.J.L.

Keyboard

BRAHMS: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel*; Eugene Istomin (piano). Columbia 10" LP disc LM-2211, \$6.00.

▲AN ACCEPTABLE recording, just a little thin in sound, of a highly competent traversal of Brahms' masterful *Handel Variations and Fugue*. One has recently heard fine things about young Istomin's progress. To judge from the way he gets through the technical brambles of this hard piece and the amount of music he makes, those favorable comments must be true. This is easily the most desirable version of this strong and powerful work; it easily eclipses the only previous LP of Kolessa for Concert Hall.

—C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Ballades*; Ginette Doyen (piano). Westminster LP disc WL-5169, \$5.95.

▲GINETTE DOYEN is a new name for your reporter, and our first meeting has been pleasant. Westminster has often displayed shrewdness in selecting young European artists and has always provided them with clean, bright, resonant recording to mirror faithfully their gifts. This is no exception to that enviable rule.

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Miss Doyen, a winner of two European piano prizes, is a sensitive musician. Though she does not have the power of the great Chopin players and though she has not yet learned to keep the ever wonderful *Ballades* continually moving, she does know what she's playing. She leads one through the music with a light hand, pausing ever so often to point out a particularly lovely passage, in the most gracious and friendly manner. No other person on records, save Casadesus, makes the *Ballades* such a rewarding experience. It should be pointed out that the Columbia disc is almost two dollars cheaper than this one.

—C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35*; **DEBUSSY:** *La Cathédrale en gloire*; *Poissons d'or*; *La Fille aux cheveux d'or*; *Masques*; *La Terrasse des audiences au clair de lune*; *Ondine*; Artur Rubinstein (piano). RCA Victor LP LM-9008, \$5.72.

▲FINE recording of the piano. Rubinstein in his performance of the Chopin sonata always makes me think of the sumptuous salons of the 19th century. It suggests definitely regal surroundings. It is a performance that serves the music auspiciously, yet it seems to me that Novaes is closer to the heart of the composer. She does not, however, have comparable reproduction.

If I recall rightly, Rubinstein played most of these Debussy pieces previously. His sense of coloration is well demonstrated in *The Sunken Cathedral*. Debussy's music profits from the richness of tonal qualities here, the well considered modulations. Yet, Rubinstein does not say the last word on any of these works, and does not have the rhythmic subtlety of Giesecking. Nonetheless, it is good to have this short recital by one of the finest pianists of our time.

—J.N.

CHOPIN: *Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58*, and *Ten Mazurkas*; William Kapell (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1715, \$5.72.

▲ONE of the most exciting keyboard records of the past year. Victor engineers have provided clean, resonant, and for-

once (or so it seems) not quite so close piano recording. Kapell continues to consolidate the artistic gains he has worked so hard to achieve over the past couple of years. Every appearance finds him putting his really fabulous technique more and more at the service of a comparable musical art. As memorable as Novaes' performance was of the great *B minor* sonata, Kapell's is worthy to stand right by it with no loss in comparison. Indeed his playing of the brief but ever-so-difficult second movement is even brilliant. As for the ten well selected mazurkas, Kapell need bow to no one as far as LP recordings go. His are the best now available. I suspect it would take a Rubinstein on a very good day to beat the young pianist's latest effort. —C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Waltzes* (complete); Leonard Pennario (piano); Capitol LP P-8172 \$4.98.

▲HUNEKER has said that these are dances of the soul and not of the body. This accords well with Pennario's intentions. Poetic interpretation is never sacrificed to exhilarating rhythm and his performance does not once descend to the merely surface brilliance of many others. The waltzes should possess a certain elegance also. It was probably with this in mind that Schumann said dancers of them should be at least countesses. I find that Pennario's interpretation, though often highly polished, lacks the really aristocratic sheen of Lipatti's or Brailowsky's. Of these two I prefer the former. His countesses smile as they dance. Lipatti too has the edge in recording. Capitol's sound is both rich and full but does not catch the inner voices the way Columbia's does. —D.R.

FRANCK: *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue; Prelude, Aria and Finale*; Joerg Demus (piano). Westminster LP WL5163, \$5.95.

▲SAINT-SAENS once wrote that the first of these works was "abominably and awkwardly written". Had he known the second he might well have included it in his damnation and, from his point

of view, he would have been right. Neither work is completely pianistic and both show Franck's great concern for the organ. On the other hand, given the proper performance, they come off amazingly well. This is one of the best performances on discs and, if it does not dim the memory of Cortot's interpretation, it has no competitors on LP. The 24 year-old pianist possesses the prodigious yet understated technique necessary for both *Finale* and *Fuge* as well as the most devotional sensitivity required of the two inside movements. One might cavil about his excessive rubato but, in this music, it does not seem out of place. The only thing missing seems to be a definite dynamic differentiation but this is noticeable perhaps only because Cortot took such pain in this regard. The recording is full, clear and brilliant, not a nuance is lost.

—D.R.

SCHUBERT: *Imprompus, Op. 142*; Lee Pattison (piano). Claremont LP disc CR-1201, \$5.95.

▲THIS RECORDING cannot stand the recent competition of Firkusny (Columbia) of Badura-Skoda (Westminster). The piano tone is shallow, there is insufficient room resonance. Pattison keeps these lovely pieces moving well and there is lightness and grace in his work. Incomplete expressive communication, however, is the drawback here. That and the engineering, which has only cleanliness to recommend it.

—C.J.L.

Voice

BRAHMS: *Liebeslieder Waltzes; German Folk Songs*; Roger Wagner Chorus conducted by Roger Wagner with Elaine Heckman and Beryl Lee Nelson (pianists). Capitol LP P8176 \$5.00.

▲THESE waltzes for small choir and two pianos never seemed particularly persuasive to me and have always appeared a somewhat synthetic and folksy by-product of Brahms' interest in the German folk-tune. Certainly they have rarely sounded so prettily vapid as they

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do in this performance. The Roger Wagner Chorale is very proficient and never sounded more expert than here. They are also a bit slick, in the professional sense of the word, like Fred Waring's chorus. When this sort of commercial sophistication is wedded to Brahms' ultra-sophisticated score the result might move concert and radio audiences to their feet, but it certainly fails to stir me. The folk-tunes on the odd side are much better. They get rid of the pianos and give these slight and lovely arrangements a very real musical stature. They also sing everything in English. This is unfortunate. No text is included and it is impossible not to strain one's ears in an effort to hear what they are saying. This does justice neither to the Chorale nor to Brahms. They are recorded in an adequate manner.

—D.R.

CHERUBINI: *La Libertà a Nîmes*; Rita McKerrow (soprano) Hilda Alexander (contralto) and Paul Hamburger (piano). Lyrichord LP LL-33, \$5.95.

▲LP SPAWNS some strange discs and this is certainly one of the more exotic. Thirteen vocal duets by any composer might become a bit wearing; by Cherubini they become practically infuriating. Inasmuch as they doubtless have musical significance this is probably a most subjective criticism, but it is one which is aided by both performance and recording. The latter is badly balanced: Mr. Hamburger is constantly covered by the two rather strong voices and his tone, when it comes through, is not representative of his playing. The ladies too have not been kindly treated: they seem very near the microphone and it is as though the entire ensemble has performed in a small closed room. This does not bring out the fine points of the performance but when all is said and done there do not seem to be many. The rich and extremely low contralto of Miss Alexander does not blend very well with the somewhat sweet voice of Miss McKerrow and the two ladies do not seem quite unanimous in their interpretation. There are, to be sure, very nicely done moments but these do little to compensate for the recording.

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the vagaries of performance and the seeming dullness of the music. —D.R.

MOORE, Thomas: *Irish Songs; Traditional Scottish Songs*; The Carolers (vocal quintet). MGM 10" LP E173, \$3.00.

▲THESE are all very lovely songs but one remains unaware of the fact through most of this performance. They are tricked with piano and harp accompaniments and harmonized in the accepted and emasculated technique of both radio and TV. It is not surprising to learn that their baritone used to solo with Fred Waring. This is really too bad for the music is lovely, all the way from *Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms* to *The Wild Swan*. The recording is the most adequate thing about this disc.

—D.R.

MOZART: *Requiem Mass in D minor*, K. 626; Robert Shaw Chorale and RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Robert Shaw. Victor LP LM 1712, \$5.72.

▲FROM the standpoints of recording and price this disc cannot be beat. The engineers have captured every nuance of performance and Victor has released this hour-long work on a single disc with no loss of fidelity. From the standpoint of performance, however, the recording is not as satisfactory. Shaw turns in an enormously slick performance which is, at times, a bit too stream-lined for my taste. In addition his soloists, from the chorale, though quite competent are often little more than that. Perhaps the main thing lacking is style. I do not feel that there is a unifying conception which places the many sections of this magnificently conceived work in a satisfying relation to each other. Whatever one may say against the Krips and de Sabata versions of this mass they, at least, possessed a consistent style. However, I prefer the Remington set, because Messner not only achieves a truly musical perspective between the components of the work but also communicates a tenderness of feeling and a breadth of intention. Stylistically, it is in the tradition of its composer's intentions.—D.R.

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro* — *Se vuol ballare; La rendella; Non piu andrai; Tutto e disposto — Aprete un po'; Don Giovanni — Madamina, il catalogo; Ah! Piela, Signori miei; Cosi fan tutte — Donne mie, la fate a tanti* (sung in Italian); *Die Zauberfloete — In diesen heiligen Hallen* (sung in German); Fernando Corena (bass) with Alberto Erede and Peter Maag conducting the Santa Cecilia Academy Orch. and the Swiss-Romande Orchestra. London 10" LP LS-671, \$4.95.

▲THIS young Italian basso is the exception rather than the rule — a fine singer and an exceptionally gifted musician. He sings his Mozart like a seasoned artist. No one who admires fine Mozart singing will want to pass up this disc. Corena is regarded as a leading *buffo* in his native land, but he is not the clowning type of *buffo*. In Leporello's catalogue aria, his delivery suggests a sort of serious believe-it-or-not attitude; the humor is subtly intimated. His Figaro conveys a feeling for dignity in the part and their is also dignity in his *Magic Flute* aria, though his German is a bit Italianate. In Guglielmo's aria from *Cosi fan tutte* there is appropriate humor. All in all, a delightful Mozart recital from a basso who commands respect. —J.N.

SCHUBERT RECITAL: *Der Juengling und der Tod; Der Juengling und der Quelle; Der Wanderer und der Mond; Ihr Bild; Liebesbotschaft; Der Schiffer; Ganymed; Erster Verlust; Die Forelle; Nacht und Traeume; Gerard Souzay with Jacqueline Bonneau at the piano.* London 10" LP LS-655, \$4.95.

▲THE well-conducted vocal line and caressing *legato* of Souzay have never been better exemplified than in this collection of 10 Schubert Songs. This young baritone is a serious artist and he sings extremely well. He seems to have gained in poise and authority in his latest recording venture.

Highly impressive is the final voice of Death at the end of *Der Juengling und der Tod*. This is artistry of a revelatory

order. Charming in romantic contrast is the baritone's capital singing of *Der Jungling an der Quelle*, which follows.

That Souzay can spin out a pianissimo vocal line in an impressively sustained manner is best exemplified by his performance of the lovely *Nacht und Traeume*.

Beautiful and searching as much of this work is, one felt, at the conclusion of the record, that Mr. Souzay yet lacks that ultimate magic that is hard to define. His teacher, Pierre Bernac (with a much inferior voice) often has this most subtle of gifts. However, this is merely a passing reflection on my part. Make no mistake, Mr. Souzay is well worth listening to.

Jacqueline Bonneau is obviously alive to the singer's moods and intentions.

—M. de S.

RANDALL THOMPSON: *Testament of Freedom; HANSON: Songs from "Drum Taps"; Eastman-Rochester Orchestra & Eastman School of Music Chorus conducted by Howard Hanson.* Mercury LP disc MG40000 \$5.95.

▲EXCELLENT recording which is only occasionally musty instead of clear. Good balance generally prevails. Thompson's *Testament of Freedom*, a setting of four passages from the writings of Thomas Jefferson, was written in 1963 and dedicated to the University of Virginia Glee Club in memory of Jefferson, the father of the school.

We have heard the work on records before in a good rendition by Koussevitzky the Boston Orchestra, and the Harvard Glee Club. While it is dangerous at any time to try to make music assume the character of oratory, it must be said that Thompson's mastery of his idiom, his continual awareness of rhythmic and tonal variety, make the *Testament* almost entirely effective. Hanson and his forces do their assignments with great fervor and it will be difficult for many to resist their sincerity.

Howard Hanson's *Songs* set to three poems from Walt Whitman's collection *Drum Taps* are not nearly so effective though their rendering is admirable.

C.J.L.

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VOICES OF SPRING IN 3/4 TIME:

Frühlingsstimmen: Liebesliederwalzer; Wo die Zitronen bluel'n: G'schichten aus dem Wienerwald; Drausen in Sievering (Johann Strauss); Donausagen (Ziehrer); Dorfschwalben aus Oesterreich (Josef Strauss); Elisabeth Roon (soprano), with Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Karl von Paupert. Vox LP PL-20900, \$5.95.

SEVEN Viennese waltzes are well recorded and neatly sung by Elisabeth Roon, whose thin but well managed coloratura voice ascends easily to the *alt* register. These are pretty performances and quite competent, and Fraulein Roon sounds much as you suspected she would sound.

There is undeniable monotony in the presentation of seven typical Viennese waltzes — charming as they are — and it is hardly conceivable that anyone will want to sit down and play all seven, one after the other. Miss Roon follows in the wake of Erna Sack and others of this school. Vox has given the new soprano (who looks young and pretty from her picture) smooth recording, which is quite up to present-day standards.

—M. de S.

SORRY, WRONG NUMBER:

Agnes Moorehead and supporting cast. Decca 10" DL6022, \$3.35.

LUCILLE FLETCHER'S celebrated *tour de force*, created for radio, stretched into a movie and now immortalized on wax, is a very effective chiller which achieves its effect in a thoroughly artful yet business-like manner. As such it is an ideal vehicle for Miss Moorehead, whose impersonations of neurotic ladies have been famous ever since her memorable performance in *The Magnificent Ambersong*. William Speir, who edited, produced and directed, turns the whole thing into a very smooth presentation and Decca's recording is all it ought to be. There is some question, however, about the worth of such a disc. Hearing it over again would be a rather flat experience. It seems to be primarily a party record

— one could just turn out the lights and enjoy oneself. —D.R.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 136)

plete control, has made us fully realize."

The implication behind our remark in reviewing Scherchen's performance of the *Ninth Symphony* was not intended to convey that it was unworthy of being heard after Toscanini's or Kleiber's. The central problem in performances of a work like this is its size, as H. F. in *The Gramophone* pointed out recently, and that problem increases "in difficulty and in interest with the addition of another — how to compress these huge dimensions on to portable wax without losing their essential magnitude in acoustic reproduction in a small and confined space." Those who like realism in sound for its own sake could be swayed by Westminster's recording (incidentally, these several recordings were accomplished on tape, not wax). Others who are not completely swayed by reproduction could become "frustrated" listening to the Scherchen performance after Toscanini and Kleiber. It is an enervating chore to listen consecutively to a work as large as the *Ninth Symphony* in three different performances. In order to evaluate them fairly, one should hear them on different occasions, which is exactly what we did, and this was the intended idea we meant to convey to our readers in the remark cited by our correspondent. As others may have misconstrued our meaning, we wish to clarify it. We agree with our correspondent that Scherchen's performance of this work has power and dignity, and we did not wish to dissuade any listener from hearing it. Its conception is as legitimate as any other and probably entailed as many hours of thought and effort on the conductor's part. In the final analysis, the listener should decide for himself which appeals to him most, but in so doing he should be able to justify his difference of opinion with any critic, which, it is self-evident, our correspondent has done.

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